

News Release

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April 3, 2006

BLM issues environmental assessment for Emerald Mountain land exchange

CRAIG, Colo. – The Bureau of Land Management has released the Environmental Assessment for the proposed Emerald Mountain land exchange in northwestern Colorado.

Under the proposed land exchange, BLM would acquire the approximately 4,400-acre Emerald Mountain parcel just west of Steamboat Springs from the Colorado State Land Board in exchange for numerous isolated BLM parcels.

The Environmental Assessment analyzes the proposed land exchange and four management alternatives for the Emerald Mountain parcel, should the exchange take place. The four alternatives include a range of recreational activities. Management of the area would be coordinated closely with local partners such as the City of Steamboat Springs and Emerald Mountain Partnership.

The State Land Board has slated the Emerald Mountain parcel for sale as part of its fiscal mandate to generate school system revenue. Through a multi-party exchange facilitated by the Western Land Group, BLM would acquire Emerald Mountain while the isolated parcels currently held by BLM would be transferred to the State Land Board. Most would then be sold to private landowners.

“The public would get the spectacular Emerald Mountain parcel in exchange for isolated parcels that are extremely difficult for BLM to manage and have little or no public access,” said Little Snake Field Office Manager John Husband. “Plus Colorado schools would receive revenue from the resulting land sales.”

BLM is proposing to exchange 127 parcels in Routt County totaling about 15,500 acres. Seventy-six percent of these parcels have no public access and 13 percent are accessible only by foot or horseback. More than half of the parcels are less than 41 acres in size.

The exchange proposal was initiated in 2003. The majority of public comments received support the land exchange. BLM has also received letters of support from Colorado Governor Bill Owens, Sen. Wayne Allard, Routt County Board of County Commissioners, the City of Steamboat Springs, the Community Alliance of the Yampa Valley, the Steamboat Springs Downtown Business Association, and the Steamboat Springs Chamber Resort Association.

BLM will accept public comment on the Environmental Assessment through May 1, 2006. To receive copies of the environmental assessment, visit the Little Snake Field Office web site at www.co.blm.gov/lspa or contact Duane Johnson, BLM Little Snake Field Office, at 970-826-5001.

